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ABSTRACT

This topical paper is fourth in a series prepared for reading specialists. Others in the series include: Number 18, Directions for Research and Innovation in Junior College Reading Programs; Number 20, Skill Development in Junior College Reading Programs; Number 21, Community College Reading Center Facilities; and Number 24, Training Faculty for Junior College Reading Programs. Reading instructors at four colleges: Penn Valley Community Junior College (Missouri); Odessa College (Texas); Lake Michigan College (Michigan); and Iowa Central Community College (Iowa) submitted general descriptions of reading materials and practices at their institutions. Each college represents a different approach to admission of students and method of instruction. The reading programs of a junior college reflect the needs of students, the philosophy of the college, the goals of instructors, and the resources at hand. (CA)

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EXEMPLARY PRACTICES IN JUNIOR COLLEGE READING INSTRUCTION

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FOREWORD

This Paper is the fourth in a series prepared for the reading specialist. James L. Laffey, Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, was responsible for selecting the experts to write these papers and for assembling the articles. The Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges is grateful for his indispensable knowledge and assistance.

The previous three Papers are listed in the front of this publication (Nos. 18, 20, and 21). Number 24, by Paul R. Kazmierski, will be issued shortly.

Arthur M. Cohen, Director
ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges

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EXEMPLARY PRACTICES IN JUNIOR COLLEGE READING INSTRUCTION

Introduction

Opportunities for instruction in reading are considered essential by leading administrators, educators, and program planners in that newest and fastest developing phase of higher education--the comprehensive junior college. One could well ask, "Where does reading instruction belong in this type of college? Are the needs of junior colleges different from the needs of other institutions?" The primary difference between a four-year institution of higher education and the public comprehensive junior college is that four-year institutions usually have restricted enrollment, but once accepted, the student has open admission to curricula; while the junior college has open-door admission to the college, but has restricted admission to curricula. The junior college therefore must have a good counseling and testing program, and it must make sure that students who enter any college curriculum either have the requisite ability or are placed in programs designed to remove academic deficiencies before proceeding.

Educational and governmental leaders agree that institutions of higher education, and especially junior colleges, must relate in meaningful and constructive ways to their own community, whether it is urban, inner city, or a combination. Specifically, the public comprehensive junior college cannot and must not display apathy toward remedial instruction for those in need. One objective of the modern junior college, the opportunity for students to eliminate academic deficiencies, is becoming generally accepted by all. Developmental programs in higher education will, however, be considered new and innovative to many people, since the research and publicity usually accorded to other programs have not been as extensive in this area.

An Illinois public junior college (Lake Land College) has initiated a typical course for this very purpose in its general studies program. It is called Reading Fundamentals,

> . . . a course designed to improve basic reading abilities through developmental exercises for increasing reading range and comprehension. Included is the application of techniques for improving skill in listening, note taking, and study-type reading. A variety of reading materials at different levels of difficulty would be used along with exercises for improving visual perception efficiency.

Lake Land College is new, having opened its doors for the first time in September 1967. Immediately recognizing that a number of its students needed reading improvement, the college developed this course and offered it for the winter quarter of its first year. This comprehensive college, appreciating the importance of reading instruction, added speed reading for both regular students and adults in its second year of operation.

Teaching developmental reading in the junior college requires as much instructor preparation as any other course. Other factors must also be considered in training an instructor to teach reading in the junior college: (1) The reading instructor must become familiar with the philosophy of the junior college and the breadth of its curriculum. He or she must be sympathetic and committed to helping students with academic deficiencies as well as to working with the more talented ones. This can be accomplished through an orientation course in the philosophy of the comprehensive junior college; (2) the instructor of reading in a junior college can be seen as more closely related to the guidance and counseling service personnel than to the academic faculty. Instructors of reading may not react favorably to this comment, but it appears to the experienced administrator of junior colleges that these instructors should assist the counselor in identifying students with reading deficiencies. A portion of their time should be set aside to help students who have difficulties in selecting courses. Other faculty members would refer these students to the remedial reading instructors, who would then test and attempt to diagnose the students' weaknesses. Consequently, a reading instructor, trained to work in a junior college, should include in his academic preparation a minimum of two or three courses in the basic techniques of counseling and guidance, testing, psychology, and other related courses.

A reading instructor in the comprehensive junior college, in establishing his role in the organization, might serve under the dean of instruction, the dean of student personnel services, or the director of community services. The philosophy of the college and its leaders, and the interests and philosophy of the instructor himself, all have a bearing on the orientation he takes. There is no one accepted organizational chart for a college and no perfect answer to this problem. Potential reading instructors, however, should make every effort to identify themselves precisely within the organization of the college where they seek appointment.

This paper makes it apparent that reading instruction in the junior college is exclusively wedded to no one established method or philosophy. On the other hand, it is amply evident that this type of instruction is unquestionably accepted as part of the junior college curriculum. As many junior colleges are now in the early stages of development, research in the area of curriculum is still spotty. There may be instances of overlapping in the following sections, as each writer

has had full freedom to address the topic as he or she desired. The paper should provide the reader with a broad perspective concerning reading instruction in the junior college, the objective behind the various programs, and the relationship of reading instruction to other curricula.

These institutional reading programs in no way indicate that there are no others equally distinctive. The selection was representative, with no rating system by which institutions were invited to submit their curriculum descriptions.

It is assumed that the Paper will motivate distribution of information concerning other reading programs in junior colleges. It should also prove valuable to other individuals in the junior college movement besides instructors of reading, e.g., college presidents, administrators, trustees, and members of the lay public, in that it exemplifies the philosophy of the comprehensive college. Those planning new facilities or drawing up architectural specifications should also find helpful the information on reading laboratories in the companion Paper (No. 21) by L. Newman.

The many facets of reading programs as outlined by the writers of this Paper leave little room for expansion on the topic. The junior colleges of the nation are rapidly becoming comprehensive; instructors of reading are making an enduring contribution to their students, for reading instruction is not just for the moment but for a lifetime. Because of the very nature of the junior college movement, because of the various needs of communities, because of the differences among students attending junior colleges, no two reading programs will be exactly alike. The reading program of a junior college reflects the needs of the students, the philosophy of the college, the goals of the instructors, and the resources at hand. It is geared to individual differences and makes every effort to adapt itself to the needs of the student.

When this Paper was planned, reading instructors in four selected junior colleges were invited to submit a general description of reading materials and practices used at their institutions. Each college represents a different approach to the admission of students and method of instruction through a variety of activities and materials. The reader may wish to correspond directly with the institutions mentioned in this paper to learn more about their specific reading programs.

G. Robert Darnes
Associate Secretary
Illinois Junior College Board

Penn Valley Community Junior College

The Reading Center at Penn Valley Community Junior College is a part of the Literature and Language Division. It is designed to provide an opportunity for students to become more proficient in reading. Specialized techniques for practice and improvement in the areas of vocabulary, comprehension, rate of comprehension, perceptual speed, and critical analysis are provided. The course, Reading 12, is offered for two hours credit.

The broad goals, basic to any reading program, chart the general direction of this center: (1) providing each student with the instruction and experience that will enable him to become a mature, independent reader, who can learn what he needs to learn through reading; (2) making the reading process so challenging and stimulating that he not only learns through reading, but also finds the enjoyment and value in reading that will make his personal life happier.

Specific objectives are based on each student's needs. In addition to the basic skills we know a student must master, we: (1) attempt to make individual readers more critical and observant; (2) strengthen the student's vocabulary and increase his potential for clear understanding and communication; (3) attempt to increase permanently each student's rate of reading with satisfactory maintenance or rise in the level of comprehension; (4) continually adjust his reading rate in light of new and different purposes for reading; (5) offer reading and study techniques to make study in other courses more effective.

Description of Program

The Optimum Reading Achievement (ORA) series by Walter L. Powers* is the basic program of the Reading Center. The three ORA books are used with the Shadowscope Reading Pacer, although each can be employed successfully with other pacers or as a program in itself. Each book consists of twenty timed essays, together with corresponding vocabulary and comprehension checks, designed to be a prime tool in the hands of the reading teacher in his efforts to individualize his instruction by determining, early in his course of study, the optimum reading level of each student. Along with each essay is a filmstrip used on the Tachomatic 500 Projector, an excellent motivator in breaking word-by-word reading habits. The ORA texts, student achievement charts, and filmstrips are designed to enable the student to transfer his reading laboratory training to the normal, everyday reading and studying of the printed page. The ORA program recognizes that

*Powers, Walter L. Optimum Reading Series. Glenview, Illinois: Psychotechnics, Inc., 1969.

learning to read well is a continuing process and that basic skills of comprehension, vocabulary, and reading rate must be defined and evaluated at each increasing level of maturity.

The ORA series represents only the basic part of the program, a sound guideline to assist in meeting individual needs. Any program must be supplemented by the various materials, methods, and techniques necessary to correct the reading deficiencies of the individual. In many cases, it is a matter of finding materials at a student's level that will build his self-confidence and result in a change of attitude toward reading. Many high-interest, controlled-vocabulary, paperback books are used in the reading center. Essential materials and equipment include, but are by no means limited to: carrels, shadowscope, projectors for slides and filmstrips, tachistoscope, pacers, tape recorders and tape readers, standard tests, records, tapes, and a carefully selected assortment of books, both paperback and hard-cover.

Virginia D. Yates
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Odessa College

The Developmental Reading Program at Odessa College began in 1946, with six sections of six or eight students each. It gradually grew to sixteen sections, and still more are needed. Classes are limited to sixteen students for each section so that, even within a group situation, individual instruction can be given.

Since Odessa College has an open-door admission policy, the reading courses are recommended to all students who fall below a score of 297 on the SCAT, below 20 on ACT (college bound), below 16 on the ACT (all high school graduates), or below 806 on the SAT. All scores represent a 12.9 grade level. If a student's scores are very low, the counselors may use a bit of persuasion to encourage him to register for the course, for a student cannot be forced to enroll in the reading courses.

The philosophy of reading at Odessa College is contained in the following catalogue preface:

> An effective citizen must read well, and reading courses develop efficient tools to use in today's milieu of words. These courses are an implementation of the philosophy that the ultimate in reading potential is seldom reached and that the so-called study skills are predominantly reading skills. Time spent in this department is an investment in self; anyone, no matter what . . . grades he makes, can improve his reading ability.
>
> All professional fields need above-average abilities in reading. Developing awareness of the competencies underlying effective reading and insight into the psychology of reading will be excellent preparation for those interested in the field of education and teaching. These courses will also serve as a sound introduction for those interested in reading as a major. Reading specialists, reading supervisors, and reading clinicians are all in great demand.

Odessa's two courses are Reading 111 and Reading 112. The first enables all readers to improve their speed and comprehension on various materials. A diagnosis determines the levels of work assignments in timed reading exercises, in study skills, and in vocabulary study. The second course, including independent laboratory work, continues and maintains improvement in rate of reading speed and comprehension skills. Each student follows a program designed to meet his specific needs.

From the beginning, every effort is made to establish excellent rapport with each student. Many junior college students have poor self-concepts. The student competes only with himself, incurring no penalty for failure. Since letter grades must be given, minimum standards are set so that each student uses correct reading practices for a given number of hours each semester. Perfect attendance is urged for best progress and satisfactory grades.

Constant strengthening of motivation is necessary to counteract feelings of inadequacy and discouragement. Reading instructors, perhaps more than teachers in other fields, must always be enthusiastic and without pretense, for students immediately sense a display of phony enthusiasm. The instructor's main purpose is to keep students happily working at fever pitch. Classwork must be varied to prevent boredom, as poor readers are notorious for their short attention span.

Much attention is devoted to breaking bad reading habits. The instructor should challenge the students to develop the patience, the determination, and the willingness needed to change bad habits acquired over the years and to replace them with good ones. For many readers, simple awareness of a problem brings about the change, but overcoming the habits of word-blocking, of regression, and of word-by-word reading can be excruciating for others. The instructor should gently but firmly remind the latter of their ultimate goals and help them set their immediate goals.

Students are introduced to the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) method of study and are given an opportunity to practice on actual assignment materials from other courses such as biology or history. Students practice many skills, including organizing materials for study and finding main ideas in paragraphs. Additional suggestions are given concerning ways to improve retention and concentration in other courses.

The philosophy of the Odessa College reading program also includes the belief that a thorough diagnosis is necessary before an instructor can assign working materials. An informal diagnosis is made from a questionnaire and a short autobiographical sketch. Individual conferences are scheduled to acquaint the instructor with each student. During one of these conferences, the student can be examined to discover if he is suffering from defective vision; if so, he is referred to an optometrist or opthalmologist.

To determine the instructional pattern necessary to produce the best results, several diagnostic tests are given at appropriate times throughout the semester. They include the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the Diagnostic Reading Test, the Word Clues Vocabulary Placement Test, the STEP Reading Test, the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, and the Otis Quick-Scoring

Mental Ability Test. The main reason for giving the Otis test is not to label a student with a certain intelligence quotient, but to prove, by later administering an alternative form of the test, that a reading course can improve his ability to take tests. This is a great morale builder and a cogent selling point.

The reading laboratory is a self-contained classroom, with separate sections for individual and small-group work. It contains many mechanical motivators and stimulators. Students who have had remedial reading for many years tend to be allergic to any kind of exercises or books, but they will respond to mechanical instruments and move smoothly to the transitional materials.

All students work individually on transfer materials after using a visual device. Transfer materials are usually timed workbook exercises designed for each student's particular need. An attempt is made to keep every student working at his instructional level rather than at his recreational or frustrative level.

Approximately 600 easy-to-difficult levels are available in popular hardcover and paperback books, calibrated for reading on the pacers. The student does not make book reports, but reads easy, interesting books of his own choice to reach his maximum rate of comprehension and is encouraged to read as many as possible during the semester.

Many sets of materials, mimeographed teacher-prepared exercises, workbooks, and boxed materials, ranging in level from the near-illiterate to the sophisticated, are used. The students buy two workbooks: A Word Clues programed vocabulary book and one containing timed exercises. These core materials provide a basis for such small-group activities as learning diacritical markings, phonetic and structural analysis, prefixes, suffixes, and word origins. They also provide exercises on skimming, scanning, comprehension, and rate.

Through the reading program, each student will improve his habits of concentration; his interpretation, understanding, and evaluation of ideas expressed in print; his efficient use of basic reading study skills; and his appreciation of various types of literature. The overall objective is to provide for a continuous development of reading skills involving vocabulary, flexibility, and rate of comprehension.

Imogene Freer, Director
and Jean McColloch
Developmental Reading Program
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Lake Michigan College

The reading program at Lake Michigan College is guided by the institutional philosophy "that education is for all who wish to develop their potential." The Reading Improvement course is designed to meet the reading proficiency demands of college. In addition, an Accelerated Reading course is offered to encourage able students to improve that ability by developing a flexible reading rate. College credit is earned toward graduation, but it is not transferable to other schools. Enrollment in reading classes is limited to twenty students to allow as much individual instruction as possible.

With the completion of the first phase of a $14 million building program, classes now have their own reading laboratory.

The student's degree of deficiency is determined by high school grades (less than 2.00 on a 4.00 scale) and by ACT scores. While enrollment in reading courses is not compulsory, the student must follow an adviser-approved program, which usually includes a remedial course.

Before beginning the fall term, students needing remedial help are given either the Diagnostic Reading Test (Survey Section) or the Nelson-Denny Reading Test to indicate their particular deficiency and to direct them to the course that will best meet their needs.

If a student ranks below the tenth percentile on the norms, he takes a course that emphasizes basic reading skills, the development of the physical habits of an efficient reader, and an interest in words as a means of building a useful vocabulary. It also helps him realize that reading involves thinking, seeing relationships, and judging critically.

Since so much of this course is oriented to the individual, a wide variety of material is used. All students use two basic texts.* They also have access to supplementary publications too numerous to list in this paper. A card file is maintained with references to particular material in many different publications. Individual assignment sheets are used to direct the student to the needed information. As a student completes an assignment or needs assistance, he consults with the instructor for another assignment or for help.

Some multi-sensory material has been found useful for individual and small-group instruction. Being able to hear, see, read, and respond provides the student with reinforcement in pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension and adds to his vocabulary. Vocabulary enlargement is stressed in all work.

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*Geake, R. Robert and Smith, Donald E. P. Visual Tracking. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1962; Diederich, Paul B. and Carlton, Sydell T. Vocabulary for College. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965.

Group activity has been profitable from time to time, for it avoids too monotonous a routine. For individual work on comprehension, a collection of de-capitated newspaper articles has been useful in detecting main ideas by stating them as headlines.

Each student keeps a folder in which he records individual assignments and graphs of scores as visual evidence of his progress. His out-of-class work in this course is minimal, but he has a weekly vocabulary assignment and is expected to read fifteen minutes each day in a book of his own choice and to record the number of pages read. By the end of the semester, he will have read as many as six books--a new experience for many students!

Students ranking from the 11th to the 50th percentile on the standardized test are advised to register in Reading Improvement, with its major emphasis on study method. The SQ3R study method is presented and applied to college textbook material. Special attention is given to comprehension.

Because effective listening contributes to improved comprehension, tapes are used. Pre- and post-test comparisons have indicated impressive improvement in listening and students have expressed satisfaction in being able to take notes more effectively in lecture courses. Although no particular stress is placed on reading rate, the student is usually pleased to note that it climbs as work is done in other areas. The student uses a pacer individually and reads books of his own choice. The pacer serves as a motivating device, for some students are greatly attracted by a mechanical tool.

Students ranking above the 50th percentile are invited to register in the Accelerated Reading course or, if in need of a definite study method, in the Reading Improvement course. Many who have had the Reading Improvement course choose to follow it up with the other one. Frequently, adult townspeople elect to register in the Accelerated Reading course, although it offers only two hours of credit.

Accelerated Reading emphasizes the development of a flexible reading rate, adjusting speed to the purpose for reading, and reading with comprehension. After the presentation of a particular technique, each student proceeds at his own rate. Units are planned using (1) skimming and scanning, (2) the transference of speed developed while reading with a pacer to reading comparable material without a pacer, and (3) rapid reading of novels. Attention to vocabulary building is continued.

It is difficult to measure the success of a reading program, for standardized tests do not measure precisely what has been emphasized during class periods, but post-tests are given, using another form of the test given at the start of the term. Comparison of scores shows that students are benefiting from these courses. For

the 1968-69 school year, more than 75 per cent of the students improved in both comprehension and rate. Each semester they are asked to evaluate the reading program and to make suggestions for its improvement. These excerpts from typical evaluations reflect a realistic picture of the value of the courses:

> I have really enjoyed this course! I feel it has helped me a great deal. In fact, I wish it were a two-semester course and . . . required. I feel I could improve even more.
>
> I feel this course is definitely an asset to this college. I definitely would encourage all freshmen students to take this course to enable them to succeed throughout their college course.
>
> I enjoyed this class very much. I thought it would be boring but it turned out different.
>
> Actually, I took this course specifically to improve my speed because, with an English major, I'll be doing a lot of reading--but I found that there was more that needed improving than just my speed, per se. I've already seen how this course has helped me.
>
> I have only one regret concerning the accelerated reading: that I had not taken it as a freshman. More important than an increase in words-per-minute in my reading rate is my ability to get more work done in a period of study and the fact that I learn more from what I do study.

What more can we ask? It is a challenge to help those who need it and who are really eager to learn.

Neva L. Bennett
Director, Reading Center
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Iowa Central Community College

The philosophy of the reading laboratory at Iowa Central Community College is that everyone can improve reading and study skills. Improvement of reading requires:

1. willingness to work
2. systematic practice under pressure for several months
3. development of critical thinking
4. increased vocabulary.

The college uses a great variety of material and equipment and a tightly sequenced class schedule. The equipment includes pacers, projectors, tachistoscopes, record players, and the like. Among the materials are vocabulary records, workbooks, comprehension kits, paperback books, films, reading charts, transparencies, and periodicals.

The first four class meetings are systematically arranged. The first one presents the purposes and organization of the course, an introductory film to demonstrate eye fixation, the use of a tachistoscopic device, reading charts, weekly schedules, and the use of an electric pacer. The second meeting gives an upper-level Diagnostic Reading Test (DRT).* The third class meeting covers perception (by tachistoscope) and uses essays to teach the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) method. It also discusses and demonstrates the timing of essays. The fourth class continues the study of perception, projects an essay on the screen in three fixations, and reads an essay on the pacer. At regular intervals, lectures and discussions are given on evaluation of study habits, effective listening, note taking, preparation for examinations (essay or objective).

The course is not competitive, but is designed to recognize and develop each student's greatest reading efficiency. It includes lectures and discussions on all aspects of reading and study habits.

Two conferences are held during the semester. One, the last week in September, discusses the DRT results, study habits, and the student's schedule. The second conference, held the last week of the semester, gives each student a graph of his pre- and post-test results covering his achievements in words per minute, comprehension, vocabulary, and composition.

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*Triggs, F. O. et al. Diagnostic Reading Test. Mountain Home, N.C.

Each essay in a series of twenty is studied through the SQ3R method. It is read first with the pacer and, the following day, projected on the screen to be reread for breath control and eye-fixation practice. Following each essay, comprehension efficiency is computed. Subsequent essays are read without a pacer and the reading timed so that the efficiency can be computed. Students should expect a drop in reading rates without the pacer, ranging from 50-75 words per minute, with isolated students showing a maximum decrease of 100 words per minute. The director explains the application of "plateaus of learning" as shown on individual charts. Particular comparisons are made of certain essays.

Regular tests are given on words from the vocabulary studied, using records, vocabulary workbooks, and comprehension materials. All work is done in the laboratory, which meets three hours per week for one semester.

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Iowa Central Community College
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